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MESSENGER OF THE GREAT SPIRIT

Robert Terrill Rundle

by
Murie ~~PATTERSON~~ *Patterson*

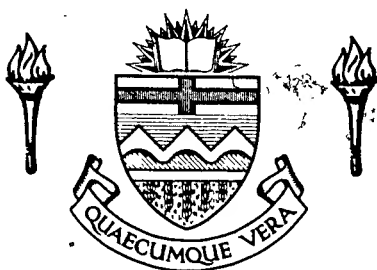
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Messenger of the Great Spirit

ROBERT TERRILL RUNDLE

by Muriel Beaton Patterson

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Muriel Beaton Patterson was born in Canada and at the age of three months was on her way with her missionary parents to Szechewan Province in China. Ever since she has been having exciting adventures or writing about those of other people. Her school days began in Chengtu, China, were continued in Kobe, Japan, and completed in Toronto, Ontario. Then she began working for the Committee on Missionary Education of the United Church of Canada, for whom she wrote *Lanterns in the China Sky* and *Church Bells Calling*. In 1942 she married the Reverend Franck Patterson and went to live in a gold mining town in northern Ontario. Today she lives in Chilliwack, B.C. where her husband is the minister of the United Church there.

Mrs. Patterson's initial interest in Robert Rundle centered in the fact that he was a missionary for whom a mountain had been named. That interest grew as she heard about his thrilling adventures and the many ways in which he helped the Indians of western Canada.

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MESSENGER OF THE GREAT SPIRIT

AROUND the foothills of the Canadian Rocky Mountains the Stoney Indians lived a nomadic life, roaming the valleys and hillsides along the edge of the plains, following the rivers after the wild buffalo. The winter of 1841 had been a long, hard, cold struggle. By February the supply of pemmican (dried buffalo meat) was exhausted and the hunters, usually so skillful in the hunt, were empty-handed. Day after day they journeyed out from the camp site into the forest to return at dusk without game.

Within the camp, the women and the older men waited for their return with anxiety, the children wailed with hunger. At last the hunters went to the Chiefs' tent for an audience.

"O Chiefs," they said to the brothers Ma-Min and Fa-dan-ha-ya, "do you hear the children crying in the tents? They cry for food. Do you see the hunters returning empty-handed? They cannot find game. Ask our god for food to feed the hungry."

Then the two Chiefs stood outside the tent and sang the song of their worship. Over and over they chanted, but before the end, one stopped to listen.

"Why do you stop?" demanded a hunter.

"A strange voice has spoken to me," replied Ma-Min.

A great silence fell upon the people gathered before the Chiefs' tent.

"Tell us what you heard," demanded his brother.

"I heard," said the Chief, "a voice saying, 'Stop your singing to me. From now until the end of your lives, watch and listen for a white man who will come to your country in the spring. He will tell you of a Father God in heaven. If he tells you about this God, that is true. Believe in that God and leave me alone. I cannot help you any more.'"

Then the Chiefs went into their tent and the people went back to theirs, talking of this strange morning. And there was no more worship to their god.

But the next day hunters went on their way. Afar off the people heard them shouting, for they had killed two moose. They brought all the meat to the camp, and the tribe had a feast and all had enough to eat. The next day the hunters sighted a herd of buffalo. They killed many of them, and the people were hungry no more.

The Stoney's did not forget about the words their Chief had heard. As spring drew near, they held a council.

"Let us send some braves to Rocky Mountain House. The white man will surely come, and from the Hudson's Bay agent we will ask of him." And so it was decided. A band of braves in colorful beaded deerskin clothes and feathered headdresses, their faces painted, started off to Rocky Mountain House to find the white man who was to come to their country as the Messenger of the Great Spirit.



On the dock in the port of Liverpool one day in the spring of 1840, a little group had gathered about three young ministers who were bidding farewell to their old homes as they started on an uncertain journey. They were on their way to America, where they were to be missionaries. Last-minute preparations were going forward on the ship, boxes and barrels of food being carried aboard, the crew making ready to let out the sails.

At last the mate called out that the ship was sailing. The three men stood silent for a moment, a little fearful of the future, more than a little wistful for the past.

"Good-by, brethren," spoke up the oldest gentleman. "God bless you, Mr. Barnley and Mr. Mason and Mr. Rundle, in your work in the foreign field. Our prayers go with you for a safe journey."

After a final handshake the three young ministers stepped lightly up the gangplank, a prayer was said, the first white sail billowed from the yardarm, and the *Sheridan*, bound for North America, drifted out with the tide. A swift crossing of only twenty-six days brought the ship to the dock at New York, and the first lap of the journey was completed.

Of the three men, the Reverend Robert Terrill Rundle was to win the greatest fame. Born in the little town of Mylor, Cornwall,

England, in 1811, he had been reared in a fine religious home. His grandfather, William Carvasso, had been one of the outstanding Wesleyan class leaders of his day, a saintly man whose influence early led his grandson Robert to thoughts of the church.

Robert Rundle entered college to study for the ministry. Already he had a reputation in Cornwall as a lay preacher. His term of study was to be a short one, however.

Across the Atlantic in Canada reports had come in from many forts urging that missionaries be sent to instruct the Indians. Great bands of redskins were deserting their trapping lines in search of a Book, while at the same time many others were learning the worst traits of the white men. Unrest and agitation seethed through the tribes. Sir George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company wrote the Wesleyan Church asking for consecrated men who would come to Canada to work with the Indians at the posts. Expenses would be paid by the Hudson's Bay Company, provision made for transportation, and lodging given by the agents at the forts, he wrote. Three young men volunteered to go to work under the Reverend James Evans, an experienced missionary to the Indians. Student Robert Rundle was one of these. He lost no time preparing to sail for America on the *Sheridan*.

Rundle docked in New York and immediately left for Montreal. Three days' hard riding brought him to that thriving port, where he inquired for James Evans. Unfortunately Evans had been delayed in England, and the Hudson's Bay Company advised Rundle to go with the first brigade as far as Norway House. The eager Rundle felt that the great adventure was really beginning the day he stepped into the canoe and the laughing, singing voyagers in their deerskin jackets and colorful sashes, pushed off up the Ottawa River, paddles flashing.

Nothing in his life as a lay preacher traveling by horseback had prepared Rundle for such a trip. Distance became a matter of weeks and months, not days. One month of paddling up the Ottawa River, portaging around foaming cataracts, running swift currents brought the brigade to Mattawa. From there they journeyed toward Lake Huron, "listening to the cataracts thundering in solitude through lakes embosomed in woods."

During this journey Rundle began the diary that in pithy, terse sentences reveals his great heart. Two days later the canoe turned from Lake Nipissing into the French River, where the

swift current carried it along at ninety miles a day. Five days later the group reached Sault Sainte Marie and entered Lake Superior. The crew paddled strongly for eight days and then landed their canoe at Fort William. There the large brigade canoe was exchanged for two smaller ones and the westward journey resumed.

At the Falls of Point-du-Bois, Rundle saw his first display of Northern Lights. Later he described this ever thrilling sight: "Aurora seen very brilliantly this evening, magnificent beyond description, prominent colors—yellow, purple, and bright green—most imposing as if the angels were displaying the drapery of Heaven to mortals, like an immense belt or arch across the sky. Little idea have the inhabitants of England of this magnificent spectacle. It surpasses all I ever witnessed."

After portaging around Slave Falls and stopping at Fort Alexander, the canoes went from Lake Winnipeg into Jack River. To the astonishment of the Englishman, large floats of ice were encountered and the travelers saw eagles, geese, ducks, and pelicans.

Rundle's Work at Norway House

On June 5, the canoes swept up to the dock at Norway House, where a crowd of Indians and whites awaited news of the outside world. The second lap of his journey was ended; yet Robert Rundle was still twelve hundred miles from his destination.

The agent, Mr. Ross, and his family received Rundle with great kindness. They urged him to rest before his hard journey to Fort Edmonton. Little did these new friends know the man they were entertaining. After the first tour of inspection, Rundle turned to his host. "Mr. Ross, is there a building we could use for worship? I would like to begin my ministry to the Indian brothers immediately."

A fur warehouse was cleared and placed at Rundle's service. As the Indians came in to trade, Rundle gathered them into groups, reading and teaching from the Bible. Some he found indifferent to his preaching, others listened with keen interest. For two months he labored, growing each day more attached to the men and women of the forest.

One Sunday he was awakened at 5:00 A.M. by his servant's announcement, "The light canoe has arrived with the minister."

Rundle jumped from his bed and dressed in great dismay. His

first thought was, "If only the Saskatchewan brigade had left and I could have been on my way." He had been working hard in another's field and was disturbed over what Evans' reaction might be. Furthermore, he had scheduled four services for the day. "It was like awakening from a delightful dream," he recorded.

Evans greeted the young missionary with tremendous kindness. He felt it a good opportunity to give the newcomer some instruction in the work he was to do in the Northwest. Rundle observed and learned much during the next few weeks. Before his departure it was his reward to baptize seventy-nine Indians, the beginning of an Indian congregation at Norway House.

When on his last evening he preached to the Indians in their village, he was so overcome with sadness at leaving them "that tears gushed from his eyes."

The next morning Rundle started the canoe trip up the Saskatchewan River to Alberta. Evans saw his colleague off with an anxious heart. As it was September and the weather cool, he knew the hardships that Rundle would have to endure.

All the provisions and comforts Norway House could supply had been stowed in the canoe for the tenderfoot. Yet Evans' predictions of a rough journey proved accurate. Once the canoe stuck on a rock, and Rundle and the other men were forced to go overboard to lighten the load. Sand flies and mosquitoes plagued the weary travelers. One night a crackling sound woke Rundle. He rushed from his tent just in time to save it as flames consumed the trees overhead. Rain and cold, hail and snow gave him a taste of Canadian winter.

The only hint of a complaint found during this trip is the sentence in his diary, "What a luxury an English bed would be."

The New Missionary Reaches His Post

The trip took less time than anticipated, and on Sunday afternoon, October 18, having crossed Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and more than half of Alberta, the canoe landed at the dock under the shadow of Fort Edmonton, a Hudson's Bay Company post.

The new missionary was thrilled by the Fort. And indeed it was an imposing sight, standing on a high bank, with a palisade of heavy logs, twenty feet high and strengthened by bolted poles, the bastions at the corners surmounted by cannons. The court-

yard was two hundred and ten feet by three hundred feet. The house of the agent, John Rowand, was the hub of the post. The Big House, as it was called, was a large building for any pioneer settlement. It was of squared timbers and was three stories in height, with an added gallery on the second floor at the front and rear. Red earth mixed with oil was smeared on the timbers, making the appearance even more impressive.

John Rowand and almost the entire post welcomed Rundle to Fort Edmonton. Although still weak and ill from the journey, Rundle remembered that it was Sunday and held an English service in the evening, the first Protestant service ever held west of Fort Garry (now Winnipeg).

The choice of Fort Edmonton as the center of activities for the missionary was a wise one. As the most important trading post west of Fort Garry, it drew the Indians from the plains and from the mountains. Hundreds of Indians passed through its gates with furs to barter for the goods from the boats or the pemmican from the stores. Crees, Blackfeet, Piegans, Sorcees, Stoneys, and Blood Indians arrived in colorful procession. Through interpreters, Rundle was able to speak to them all.

The Fort itself had had an interesting history. Originally built in 1795 near the mouth of the Sturgeon River, it had stood near the Northwest Fur Trading Company's port of Fort Augustus. In 1807, the Indians went on the warpath and destroyed both posts. The two companies moved to what is now the heart of Edmonton, building side by side for mutual assistance in time of attack.

A few years later the two companies again moved, as the Indians were restless and troublesome, but in 1819, the present site of the Alberta legislative buildings was occupied. Again the posts stood side by side, with a great door through the common wall that the Indians were never allowed to use. When the British Government finally amalgamated the two companies under the Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Edmonton was retained as the site of the post and John Rowand remained as chief agent.

The post was a thriving, busy place in the winter, with a blacksmith, a tailor, a cooper, an armorer, a carpenter, and shipbuilders plying their trades. Yet often life was monotonous, as the Fort was cut off from the East except by the brigade boats in summer and Indian runner at other times. Messages and letters were months in transit.

John Rowand proved to be a kind and generous friend to Rundle. Lodging was provided in the Big House, an interpreter placed at his disposal, and from the agent's own stables, of which he was very proud, a good horse given to the missionary.

Rundle's work at the post was a round of services in English, Gaelic, and Cree. A class was started for the children, and Rundle threw himself wholeheartedly into his work. The same spirit of genuine affection that had drawn the Indians to him at Norway House brought results at Fort Edmonton.

Before long the news spread that a white man at the Fort could speak with the Great Spirit. Around their campfires and in their councils, the Indians discussed the missionary, and those who had been fortunate enough to hear him speak retold his sermons. Some wondered why he hadn't appeared before. Other white men had come to trade and build forts; where had the missionary been? After much deliberation, it was decided that Rundle "had come from heaven in a piece of paper that was opened by one of the company's gentlemen and lo! Rundle came out."

Getting Acquainted beyond the Fort

Life in the confines of the Fort began to chafe the restless and dauntless minister. As he heard more about his field, he longed to see it. The boundaries were fixed not by roads or districts but by rivers. Along the Saskatchewan were four main forts: Edmonton, the largest and most central; Fort Pitt, midway between Fort Carlton, four hundred miles east, and Rocky Mountain House, a hundred miles up the river. To these four posts more than five thousand Indians came to trade.

Soon after Rundle's arrival, John Rowand was going to visit the hunters' camp at Beaver Lake and suggested that Rundle accompany him. It was January and cold as the western winters can be. Rowand wanted the tenderfoot to make sure he was well clothed for the journey, especially as they were to travel by night to avoid snow blindness. On his return Rundle recorded the journey as follows:

"We were drawn by four dogs driven by a half-breed. . . . Weather very severe and I was warmly clad: sealskin cap tied under chin, moccasins, pair of lamb's wool stockings, flannel shirt, woollen drawers to foot, thick trousers lined, leggings and black

silk gaiters, waistcoat, pilot coat, and shawl tied round the neck; and in the cariole,¹ buffalo robe and blankets. It was a beautiful starlit night with some faint glitterings of the aurora.

"The cold was intense and we stopped about 10 o'clock and lighted a fire; about 1:00 A.M. we came upon an encampment of two men belonging to the fort. Here we breakfasted and rested about three hours. Afterward we proceeded until sunrise when we again halted on the Beaver Hills. The cold at this time was more severe than ever; a convincing proof of its intensity was afforded us by the very sluggish ascent of the smoke into the atmosphere. Indeed it might be said to scarcely ascend at all."

At the camp Rundle was lodged in one of the hunter's tents with Mr. Rowand. Two days later he wrote, "In the evening I addressed the Indians in a tent fitted up for the occasion of my visit with Mr. Rowand, whose kindness during this journey will always be remembered by me with lively emotion of pleasure and gratitude."

It must have been on an early trip such as this one that Rundle observed buffalo very close to the post. In addition to his stable of fine horses, which were often raced in the summertime on a track at Fort Edmonton, Mr. Rowand kept several hundred pack horses. These were pastured during the winter months around the Horse Hills, where the animals were able to paw the snow away to feed on the dry grass beneath. The grass attracted large herds of buffalo, for the hard snow was too sharp for their hoofs.

The company's men would stage drives on the buffaloes, killing many and bringing the meat back to the post. Within the palisades was a unique refrigeration system. A large pit was dug and lined with blocks of ice. Into this the buffaloes, quartered but not skinned, were placed. When full, the whole pit was covered with ice and flooded with water, which froze solidly. In this manner, Fort Edmonton had fresh meat until nearly the end of summer. It was a tremendous boon as the herds drifted farther away to better pastures during the warm months and hunting was more difficult.

It was during Rundle's time that Fort Edmonton began to export buffalo hides in such great quantities that fears were expressed

¹ A Canadian sleigh fashioned of a thin flat board about eighteen inches wide, bent up in front and with a straight back. The sides were stitched of buffalo skins. This covering was stretched up over the front so that the person riding in the cariole was completely protected from the weather.

that the buffalo would become extinct. The Indians themselves were careless of this food supply, since the buffaloes were always so numerous. Paul Kane, the artist, was amazed at the waste when the Indians slaughtered hundreds of animals but never used most of the meat.

The trip to Beaver Lake spurred Rundle to further travels. In February he started off in a cariole for Rocky Mountain House. Again, traveling was done at night. During rest periods, the howling of wolves, growing ever nearer, broke "the fearful solitude of the place." Rundle found the two-day trip very severe. About noon of the second day, the Indian driver, seeing that the missionary could not continue, threw several articles out of the cariole and made the white man sit in the sled. About midnight they made camp, and, fortunately, Rundle got a good night's sleep. They had been traveling some distance inland, but the next morning they sighted the Saskatchewan. On the opposite shore stood Rocky Mountain House. The agent, a man named Herriott, greeted the exhausted missionary with kindness and sympathy. After a good rest Rundle recovered enough to be on hand when a party of Blood Indians arrived from the plains, wearing gay ornaments made of beads, porcupine quills, and feathers. Their first inquiries were for the strange white man. "This is Mr. Rundle, the missionary who talks with the Great Spirit," explained the interpreter.

Led by the Chief, the Blood Indians paraded before him. Some kissed him, others stroked his clothes, and still others shook hands—with the left hand, the one nearest the heart.

A faint sound of singing could be heard in the distance. Soon a band of Blackfeet and Piegiens appeared outside the Fort singing a native song, the Chief of the Blackfeet at the head of the procession leading a horse. With dignity and pomp the horse was presented to the agent before the bands would enter the Fort.

Rundle was delighted with the Indians he was meeting. As each group arrived he found an interpreter and arranged immediately for services. He spoke in words that they seemed to understand. Filled with superstitious fears and longing for reassurance, they heard of Gitchi Manitou, the one Great Spirit who rules and looks after his children. Following each service, the bands would beg Rundle to visit them in their camps on the plains. The weather was severe and Rundle such a poor traveler that he hesitated. Then one day he could wait no longer.

A band of Stoneys arrived at Rocky Mountain House. "Where is he who speaks with the Great Spirit?" they demanded.

Rundle hurried from his lodging with his interpreter and in his usual manner walked up to the leading Indian with hand outstretched. As no answering movement came from the Indian, he took the man's right hand and shook it. Then he walked down the line of silent men shaking hands, saying, "Welcome, my brothers."

Through his interpreter Rundle heard the story of the Chiefs' dream. "Come with us to the camp," begged the Stoneys. "We have made a promise to the Chiefs to bring to them the white man who will teach us about the Great Spirit."

"I will come," promised Rundle. "Go back to your Chiefs and tell them that Robert Rundle will visit their lodge next month."

When the Stoneys arrived back at their camp, the leader commanded, "All the braves must stand in a line before the Chiefs' lodge." Wonderingly they obeyed and the band who had met the missionary taught each Indian to shake hands.

"Why do you reach out hands?" asked one Chief.

"The missionary taught us," replied the leader. "We must shake hands with everyone in the world—to make peace with one another."

The time appointed for Rundle's visit drew near. A band of braves was sent out some distance from the camp to welcome the visitor. As Rundle was sighted, one of them spurred his horse back to tell the Chiefs.

To the missionary's surprise, the whole camp, led by the Chiefs, came out to meet him. As he sat on his pony, the Indians marched past in silent review to shake hands. After this ceremony he was escorted between the Chief brothers Ma-Min and Fa-dan-ha-ya to a large tent prepared for the occasion. The Indians squatted on evergreen boughs covering the ground, waiting silently for the missionary to speak.

With all the fervency that he felt before such a listening group, Rundle poured out from his heart words about a Father in heaven, the great Gitchi Manitou, the spirit of love, the one who cares for the birds of the air and the children of the world.

When he had finished, one of the Chiefs spoke, "We have heard you, and what you have said is good. We believe, and from this day forth we worship only the Great Spirit, the Father in

heaven." Rundle had felt an affection for the Indians before; now the meaning of his ministry was made clear to him.

The women of the tribe insisted upon cooking for him, carrying choice dishes of buffalo tongues, boiled buffalo, deer steaks, and strong tea to his tent. At the time of parting Rundle felt that the Stoney Indians were his staunch, true friends. Whenever their paths crossed in the future, he found the Stoneys practising the truths that he preached to them.

In spite of the severity of the weather, Rundle rode on to visit the Blackfeet camp. A white horse was brought to meet him, and with an escort he rode into the camp at Bow River, where the Chiefs of all the tribes escorted him to an unusually large tent stitched of buffalo skins. The floor inside was lined with fur robes. Rundle was impressed with the drawings of serpents and warriors and strange designs on the outside of the warriors' tents. It wasn't long before the missionary discovered that the principal Chief was a powerful warrior with at least seven wives. On his tent were drawings depicting his prowess and bravery. His reception for Rundle was as fine as any given for the chief of another friendly tribe, and from this time on Rundle was always welcome in any Blackfeet camp.

The Blackfeet warriors impressed Rundle more than those of any other group he had met at Rocky Mountain House. The reason was partly their physical stature; they were tall, handsome men who carried themselves with dignity. Rundle, himself short in height and small in physique, remarked, "I felt the insignificance of my stature in comparison with these tall sons of the plains."

The Blackfeet were fighting men; their reputation as swift and deadly hunters was notorious in the West. For Rundle, it was a display of courage to ride calmly into their camp. "These are the Indians so blackly painted in history whose name alone is enough to cause alarm," he wrote in his journal.

Once again the Indians showered every kindness upon him and won his affection. Although it had been reported to him that some Blackfeet braves who had heard him preach of a loving Father had left the services at Rocky Mountain House in anger, the tribes assembled to honor him at the Bow River camp listened with interest and courtesy.

If he was ever disappointed in the slowness of the Indians to

receive his message, he never revealed it. He kept doggedly preaching the simple words about love that he felt the Indians in their roving, natural life could understand.

This "campaign," as the missionary called it, set the pace for his whole eight years' service in Alberta. Although his headquarters was Fort Edmonton he kept on the trail through all seasons of the year, following the Indians as they moved from camp to camp. It meant that he never established a permanent piece of work in any center. Yet his physical courage, driving his frail body to limits of endurance, his zeal in teaching and preaching, and most of all his regard for the Indians endeared him to them. Years after Rundle's forced departure to England, the Indian missionary Henry Steinhauer, traveling over the plains came one evening to an encampment of Indians. After the evening meal, one of them led in prayer finishing with the petition, "O Lord, send us another missionary like Rundle."

Translating and Teaching

During the first two years while Rundle was visiting the forts in his field, meeting the tribes, becoming acquainted with the Hudson's Bay agents, and learning to speak the Cree dialect, a momentous event was taking place in Norway House. James Evans, now General Superintendent of Indian Work, had succeeded in reducing the Cree syllabics to a written form.

Evans lacked presses, inks, forms, paper, but he found substitutes. He took the lining from the tea chests to make the letters and the forms, used as printing presses the fur presses that were for baling skins, mixed fish oil with soot from the chimneys for ink, and began to print portions of Scripture and hymns on the natural paper of the forest, birch bark. One of the greatest treasures belonging to Victoria University, Toronto, today is one of these little Cree books.

The magic word that now birch bark could "talk" soon sped to the West. Not only Rundle, but the Hudson's Bay Company agents, Mr. Rowand and Mr. Herriott, were anxious to learn the written Cree language. Rundle, in his fort schools, had been laboriously teaching the children Bible passages and hymns by memory work only. Now he wrote urgently to Mr. Evans, "Come out and teach us the Cree syllabics."

James Evans, eager to see the work Rundle was doing in his tremendous field, made the month-long journey out to Fort Edmonton. According to a terse sentence in the Hudson's Bay Company's records, he arrived in October, 1841, and remained with Rundle until November 23. During his stay at Edmonton, James Evans taught Rundle the Cree syllabics.

Now to Rundle's incessant travel was added the task of translation and teaching. At Fort Edmonton he held school for the children, with a service both morning and evening. The job of translation was a pleasant one and Rundle tackled it with enthusiasm.

Rundle discovered very early in his ministry that the Indians liked to sing. At first he would teach them as they gathered around the campfire at night or in the lodges of the braves in wintertime. As hymns were translated, Indians made copies that they bound together. These Cree hymn books, written laboriously by hand, are still to be found in scattered Indian settlements across Alberta, where the descendants of Rundle's converts live. Whenever discouragements came—and they were numerous—Rundle must have remembered with pride the hymn-singing Indians whom he had taught.

Rundle's patience and his unflagging determination to preach the gospel of Christ kept him going in spite of indifference and misunderstanding. Time and again Sunday was a day of revelry and drunkenness both in the camps and the posts. His first Christmas at Fort Edmonton was a dreary one, and the record for January, 1847, reads, "Two services not well attended, drunkenness at the fort, also fighting and dancing. Such is Edmonton." Yet nowhere in his journal does he even hint at quitting his job. Baptisms and marriages, four, ten, eleven, he notes with quiet joy. As in the days of old, Christian converts were few in number and scattered in distances. Hundreds of miles were traveled to achieve what might be termed meager returns.

Facing and Overcoming Difficulties

The dangers of everyday travel encountered by the intrepid minister might have sent a less zealous person back to the more comfortable life of nineteenth-century England. In the winter, days and nights were spent in the open without proper food or protection. Snow blindness and frostbite were common occur-

rences. Lack of food harassed travelers in Alberta who depended for provisions on game such as deer and buffalo and fish from the rivers. Pemmmican, made by drying buffalo meat and pressing it down into bags, was carried by everyone.

On several occasions Rundle was forced to feed pemmmican even to his horses, as the snow was so deep the horses could not paw it away to reach the prairie grass beneath. One winter the ice on the Saskatchewan gave way as Rundle was crossing. He plunged into the water, escaping only by a miracle.

In the summer, rivers, which formed the natural roads from camp, were crossed by swimming the horses, the riders clinging to the horses' tails. If the current was swift, horse and rider were in danger until the horse could find a footing on the river bed.

Dampness, cold, and mosquitoes plagued Rundle day and night. Often the tent and the mosquito net he carried would be of no use to the missionary when the time came to make camp. To reach his Indians, he would push himself to the point of exhaustion. A typical entry in his diary read, "July 30—I was very tired when we encamped for the night, having been twelve and three-quarter hours on horseback."

It was little wonder that Rundle endeared himself to the Crees, the Blackfeet, the Stoneys, the Piegans, and the Blood Indians, for he suffered with them. He arrived at one camp to find the Indians dying of disease and famine. "They had been eighteen days without good food, eating the buffalo skins that they used as beds," he wrote. "March 3—The men were freezing although wrapped in their blankets. . . . Dogs starving. . . ."

Not all the Indians received the missionary with friendliness. Several notes testify to their thieving. Once Rundle lost his knife, and his companion a good handkerchief. At one camp they took turns guarding the horses.

After such episodes it was music to his ears when a Cree brave strode up to him following a service to remark that the Crees were like hungry young birds with their mouths open waiting to be fed by their parent.

One day Rundle arrived at a camp where the warriors were preparing to get revenge for their Chief, Big Wolf, who had been stabbed during a fight with another tribe. When Rundle asked for permission to preach, the Chief consented, with this warning:

"White Man, speak to us of those things that you know. Do not

speak of revenge or of the cutting off of fingers, which are matters known only to the red man."

Rundle listened in silence as the noted warrior gave his orders of what the day's sermon was to contain. Around him were the most faithful band of men any chief could command. "Offend the Chief and you offend the tribe," thought the missionary.

With mounting excitement, Rundle stood, his Bible in his hand, to preach the word of God. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." Gathering strength, Rundle's voice soared over the still warriors as he pled with the men to forgive their enemy and not shed the blood of other Indians on the plains. He spoke with all the eloquence at his command.

As he concluded, the silence was the silence of waiting, tense and full. Then Big Wolf drew himself to his full height. "The missionary speaks with the tongue of truth," he said and went into his tepee.

Some months later Rundle's journeys brought him to an encampment where he was warmly welcomed as though the Indians were old friends. To his surprise the camp was filled with hunters from Big Wolf's tribe who shared with him their evening meal and their tents.

"The white man speaks with wisdom," said one young brave. "The tribe of Big Wolf no longer practises the evil customs of their ancestors. The missionary spoke to the heart of Big Wolf and he heard him."

In the fall of 1846 Rundle was invited by John Rowand to be one of the party scheduled to meet the artist Paul Kane at Fort Carlton. Sir George Simpson had given Kane permission to travel through the Northwest and a commission to do some paintings of Indian life and customs. In his book *Wanderings of an Artist* Kane relates several experiences that he had with Rundle.

Since there were no roads through the forest, travelers usually followed the rivers. The party rode as close to the Saskatchewan River as possible. It was a new and exciting life for Paul Kane and an opportunity for Rundle to meet more Indians. In the first few days the party went on a buffalo hunt and a wolf hunt where one

of the Indian hunters showed his dexterity by riding into a pack of wolves, rounding out one of them, and driving it back to the whole group; then he shot it with his first arrow. The artist had many chances to sketch the Indians in action and to take part in the hunt, bringing down a deer as his contribution the first day.

The riding was rough and strenuous. By the time the party reached Fort Pitt, Rundle was exhausted. Years of living on the trail and of eating pemmican, turnip soup, berries, beavers, deer, buffalo meat—all cooked Indian style—had taken their toll of his frail physique. Now he urged Rowand and Kane to go on without him. He and an Indian boy stayed behind.

A day and a half's hard riding with only two stops brought the artist and agent to Fort Edmonton at dusk. As night fell, the wind increased to almost hurricane force and, to their horror, the sky behind the Fort was red. The prairie over which they had ridden that day was being swept by fire. What had happened to Rundle and the Indian boy?

For three days no one rode from the desolation of the prairie, and the Fort had almost given up hope when a shout came from the river bank on the opposite shore. Two riders appeared, their horses weary and travel-stained. What a cheer arose as they swam their horses across and climbed the bank to tell their story.

After a day's rest Rundle had felt refreshed, so he and the Indian boy had started the two-day journey to Fort Edmonton. They took the shortest trail across the prairie. They had not been riding long when they came over a knoll and saw smoke, with here and there an angry gust of red.

"We must get to the river and across it," said Rundle to the boy. "Which is the closest part of the Saskatchewan?"

"There is a bend in the river a few miles behind that grove of bushes," replied the boy. "If we can reach that point we can light a back fire and then swim across the river."

Galloping their horses as hard as they could, the two saw with despair that the fire not only was gaining but had spread out to almost cut off the river.

With a shout the Indian boy threw himself from his horse and lit a dry clump of bushes. As it caught, the two continued on the gallop. So intense was the smoke screen now that Rundle almost despaired. With their horses stumbling beneath them and their eyes almost useless from smoke, they finally reached the river.

They splashed frantically into the water. The horses were too weakened to battle the current, so they drifted downstream until they reached a shallow part. There they pulled themselves to the bank.

All night Rundle and the boy lay and watched with horror the awful scene. Fire on the prairie was one of the Indians' most dreaded enemies. When morning dawned the worst was over, but the intense heat and smoke still made riding unpleasant. Fort Edmonton was the most welcome sight in the world to the two adventurers.

Paul Kane reports another adventure that Rundle had during the artist's visit. The missionary had gone to visit one of the Indians who was ill when a wild, half-starved string of huskies broke loose and attacked him. Howling and snarling savagely they rushed Rundle, who had no protection, not even a heavy stick. One of the more savage dogs made a sudden leap at the minister, knocking him to the ground. Rundle fought a losing battle, as the other dogs gained courage and began to circle closer. With all the strength at his command the missionary shouted for help, his voice hardly heard above the clamor of the dogs.

But the barking of the dogs themselves brought an Indian squaw from a tent a few hundred feet away. Snatching up a heavy stick of firewood, she ran to the rescue, crying shrilly for her companions. So dangerous were these dogs that many brave Indian men would not tackle them; yet seeing the missionary's plight, the few squaws never hesitated. After a fierce struggle, the dogs were driven off and Rundle was helped to his feet. Fortunately he escaped with minor injuries.

Results that Endure

The last Christmas spent at Fort Edmonton was a memorable one for Rundle, far different from his first holiday season in Alberta. The chief room of the Big House was a large hall about twenty-five by fifty feet, heated by fires that were never allowed to go out in the wintertime. The walls and ceiling were boarded and decorated with fantastic and gaudy scrolls that, according to the artist Kane, "made a saloon which no white man would enter for the first time without a start and which the Indians always looked upon with awe and wonder."

For the Christmas feast there were assembled around the plain wooden table, Mr. Rowand, Mr. Herriott, three clerks, Mr. Thebo, the Roman Catholic missionary from Manitou Lake, Mr. Rundle, and Paul Kane. Tin plates reflected jolly faces, and the table groaned under the magnificence of the dinner.

Mr. Herriott presided over a dish of boiled buffalo at one end of the table while Mr. Rowand carved a small buffalo calf at the other. The artist served a dish of dried moose nose. Rundle cut up the beavers' tails, while another guest served smoked roast wild goose and still another offered white fish browned in buffalo marrow. In addition to the meats there were potatoes, turnips, and bread. The gentlemen enjoyed a Christmas dinner long to be remembered even though the conventional puddings and pies were missing.

To the dance in the evening came all the people within the Fort, Indians and whites in their most picturesque garbs. It was a day that Rundle, when he was back in England, must often have remembered, perhaps with some nostalgia.

On January 6, 1848, Rundle had the joy of performing the wedding of Mr. Rowand's son and Mr. Herriott's daughter. Little did he realize that this was one of the last marriages he would perform in the West. Baptisms, which he performed only with fresh water from the river after the injunction in the Bible to use living or running water and never melted snow, could be recorded in the pages of a small book. Marriages could be counted aloud, and converts who had professed Christ could be named one by one.

There was Ben Sinclair, a Cree Indian who had become Rundle's right-hand man. After he had worked with him for several years, Rundle asked Ben if he would be willing to stay at Pigeon Lake and work with the Indians camping there. It was not an easy task, for a camp of the warlike Blackfeet determined to drive him out. After one war party had descended on the Crees, killing several, Sinclair decided to move on to the North. It was no sign of cowardice, for the faithful Indian continued his work of preaching and teaching, work that contributed to the establishment of a thriving missionary post at White Fish Lake.

Pokan, a Cree chief, not only remained loyal to the white man but helped in settling the difficulties with his fellow-Indians during the rebellion of 1885 that so harassed the government. He had

been won to a life of peace by Rundle and continued to lead his tribe in the ways he had learned from the missionary.

There was also Peter Erasmus, whose name is forever recorded as translator and interpreter of chapters of the Cree Bible. Who but Rundle with his flaming message could have taken this Indian from his life of hunting and fishing and made him one of the most outstanding assistants to the growing pioneer church of the prairie?

There were the Stoney Indians who later welcomed George MacDougall, a missionary, as a friend and brother. To MacDougall's amazement the tribe was living the Christian doctrine. They had some portions of the Bible translated and written by hand on birch bark. They had their own hymn books, and how they enjoyed singing! Their leader, who was an old man with long white hair and flowing beard, was treated with tremendous respect by everyone. MacDougall could not refrain from expressing his surprise, for the usual practice among the Indians had been to do away with the old, the weak, and the helpless of the tribe.

"Stephen Kecheyegs is our leader. We are Christians who follow the way that Rundle taught us," was the reply to MacDougall's comment.

Most notable of Rundle's converts was Maskepetoon (Broken Arm), a famous Cree chief. Not long after the missionary first reached Fort Edmonton, Maskepetoon appeared on a trading mission. As usual Rundle held a service for the Crees. Maskepetoon's only comment was, "I will never become a Christian as long as there are horses to steal and scalps to take."

So warlike was Maskepetoon that even his father warned him, "My son you are making a great mistake. The glory you are seeking will be short lived. War is wrong. If you want to be a great man, work for peace."

Maskepetoon had an ungovernable temper. In a fit of anger he scalped one of his own wives; she recovered but ever afterwards had a shiny skull. He appeared to resent the teachings of Rundle, yet in fact he had a great respect for the intrepid Cornishman who never failed to speak out against the taking of a life in revenge.

In spite of his protests that he would not become a Christian, Maskepetoon began to study the Cree translations with Mr. Herriott, the agent. Rundle's life and words were turning him from the road of war. At length he asked an old member of his tribe,

"What is best in life?" For answer the old man picked up eight small sticks. The four in his left hand he called falsehood, dishonesty, hatred, and war; those in his right, truth, honesty, love, and peace. With all the picturesque eloquence of the red man, he described the fruits of war and peace. Holding aloft his left hand he cried, "What shall I do with these? Shall I keep them or burn them?"

"Burn them," shouted the warrior.

"And what shall I do with those that make peace? Shall I bind them and give them to you as a remembrance of what I have said?"

"Bind them well and give them to me," replied the grateful Chief.

From that day forth, Maskepetoon was not ashamed to acknowledge the teaching of Rundle. He had many opportunities to prove himself in the troublous years to come. Once when he was driving with the Reverend John MacDougall they met an old man who stopped to shake hands. The Chief held out his hand after a moment's hesitation. "John," he spoke to the missionary, "that man killed my son and often I longed to take his life. It was a hard thing to do but now I am glad that I gave him my hand."

On another occasion a party of Blackfeet met the Crees at Wetaskiwin—the Hills of Peace—and asked for a truce. When they were escorted to Maskepetoon's tent to smoke the pipe of peace, one of the Blackfeet stopped in consternation at the door. He was the murderer of Maskepetoon's father. According to Indian law, his life belonged to the Chief, but Maskepetoon called for his best horse and his best coat and said, "You killed my father. Time was when I would have taken your blood. Now I give you my best horse and my best coat. You must now be my father and tell your people that this is the way Maskepetoon takes his revenge." Years later Maskepetoon died a martyr's death trying to make peace between the Crees and the Blackfeet. The man who had shown him the right path was serving his church in England, but his heart was still with his Indian comrades.

In July of 1847, Rundle was riding to the Fort with his Indian guide when his horse suddenly stumbled. The missionary was thrown violently to the ground and knocked unconscious. When he came to, he found that his left arm had been fractured just above the wrist. Rundle, worn out by poor food, severe climate,

and continuous travel, did not recover from this shock sufficiently to remain in Canada. The following June, after a final visit to Rocky Mountain House, he went East to Norway House and was persuaded to go on to England.

His return to England he recorded simply: "September 23rd, 1848—My last Sunday in the country, for the following Saturday I went on board the ship which was to bear me back to old England. . . . I landed at last . . . after an absence of eight and one-half years." For the next thirty-eight years until his death in 1886, he served the church in England.

In 1858 an expedition was sent to find the best route through the Rocky Mountains. Led by the explorer Palliser, the company included Sir James Hector, surgeon and geologist. It was the latter's field to explore the mountains in and around Banff. His chief hunter and guide was Nimrod, a Stoney who won the admiration and affection of the Englishman for his devotion and skill. They came one day to a lovely valley and prairie where an old Stoney in their party told Sir Hector that he had been Rundle's guide. "The missionary was the first white man to come to this place," he stated. "We camped here for many days in this little prairie."

In his report Sir Hector wrote, "The Stoneys are all Christians and some of them can read and write in their own language, using the Cree syllabic characters that were invented by the Wesleyan missionaries."

As the expedition recorded mountains, lakes, and passes upon their maps, they had the privilege of naming them. Looking back on that lovely valley where a white man had camped for sheer love of beauty and of his Indian comrades, Sir Hector wrote with firm hand upon the map, "Mount Rundle." Thus, just as the memory of Robert Rundle was forever imprinted in the hearts of the Indians with whom he had worked, it was enshrined for all time when his name was given to that mighty snow-capped peak at Banff.

To this day no single church or congregation, no city or great building bears the name of this pioneer missionary to Alberta. His grave is in England, but his monument is this lofty snow-covered peak high in the Canadian Rockies. Mount Rundle has become a symbol of the living influence of the Messenger of the Great Spirit—Robert Terrill Rundle.

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